

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills,
Executive Director for Environment and Economy**

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	22 May 2018
Subject:	Broadband Programme Update and Rural Broadband Provision

Summary:

To provide an update on the current status of the Lincolnshire Broadband Programme. To outline future plans and to provide details relating to the difficulties of deploying faster broadband to rural end users.

Actions Required:

Members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee are invited to review the progress of the Lincolnshire Broadband Programme and highlight any comments for future consideration in relation to rural broadband provision.

1. Background

The Lincolnshire Broadband Programme commenced in March 2013. The key objectives of the programme at that time, was to provide Superfast Broadband to 90% of all premises within the county and secondly, to ensure that all remaining premises had a download speed of at least 2Mb/s.

The programme was jointly funded by Lincolnshire county Councils, the seven District partners and BDUK (DCMS). Total funding at that point was circa £30M, with BT adding an additional £10M Capital.

During the course of this first deployment, BDUK released further funding to Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) of £1.8M and this was matched by LCC with a further £1.8M. The objective of this second deployment was to push overall Superfast coverage to 95% across the UK. It was understood that at that time, LCC would achieve circa 93%.

The first deployment concluded in March 2016, with an underspend of £14m which, under the terms of the agreement with BDUK, has to be reinvested in further Broadband coverage. LCC has an aspiration to hit 97% Superfast coverage as a result and will shortly be going out to Tender for a third round of deployment (Appendix A describes the detail around each round of deployment).

At the time of writing, we are in the second deployment and have completed an additional 10K premises over and above Deployment 1. Coverage sits at circa 93.5% Superfast. We are confident that when the second deployment finishes, we will have reached 97% coverage.

However, as we look to move into a third deployment, it appears very clear that we will need to consider alternative technologies to reach our more rural areas. One concern sits around whether sufficient funds exist to get as close to 100% coverage as possible. Recent Government strategy focusses on the deployment of full fibre to the premises networks, but it is our opinion that this is at the expense of the more rural areas, with a subsequent widen of the urban/rural broadband divide.

2. Conclusion

Members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee are invited to review the progress of the Lincolnshire Broadband Programme and highlight any comments for future consideration in relation to rural broadband provision.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

N/A

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Lincolnshire Broadband Programme Reference notes

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Stephen Brookes, who can be contacted on 01522552450 or stephen.brookes@lincolnshire.gov.uk